

Chapman University Chapman University Digital Commons

Printed Performance Programs (PDF Format)

Music Performances

10-14-2007

Faculty Recital

Roger Lebow
Chapman University

Phillip Young
Chapman University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/music_programs

Recommended Citation

Lebow, Roger and Young, Phillip, "Faculty Recital" (2007). *Printed Performance Programs (PDF Format)*. Paper 471.
http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/music_programs/471

This Faculty Recital is brought to you for free and open access by the Music Performances at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Printed Performance Programs (PDF Format) by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
Conservatory of Music

presents a

Faculty Recital

The Sonatas for Violoncello and Piano
By Ludwig Van Beethoven

Roger Lebow, cello

Phillip Young, piano

October 14, 2007 • 2:00 P.M.
Salmon Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Sonata in F Major, Op. 5 No. 1

Ludwig Van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Adagio sostenuto; Allegro
Rondo: Allegro vivace

Sonata in C Major, Op. 102 No. 1

Andante; Allegro vivace
Adagio; Tempo d'Andante; Allegro vivace

INTERMISSION

Sonata in A Major, Op. 69

Allegro ma non tanto
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio cantabile; Allegro vivace

This performance is part of Daniel Pearl World Music Days, an annual global concert affirming the ideals of tolerance, friendship, and our shared humanity. World Music Days is inspired by the life and work of the late journalist and musician Daniel Pearl, who would have celebrated his birthday on October 10th.

Roger and Phil join people around the world in a tribute to all the visionary men and women who use the power of music to lift peoples of different backgrounds and beliefs above the differences that set us apart. Through our music we reaffirm our conviction that "alle Menschen werden Brüder."

PROGRAM NOTES

Glance through an early 19th century music catalogue and you will find literally hundreds of works by dozens of unknown composers. While few would advocate an undiluted evening spent in listening to this now-forgotten literature, how dearly one would like to be able to hear with the ears of a music lover from the turn of the 19th century, and to hear the Beethoven cello sonatas as if for the first time, in all their startling and audacious originality.

The Classical-era literature for cello is small: before the present works, there were but the two well-known concerti by Haydn and nothing at all from Mozart (save a fragmentary Andantino and an even more fragmentary concerto sketch). There was, to be sure, a considerable body of works written by cellist-composers. Among these, the most noteworthy, both for musical merit and for their technical advances, were the concerti and sonatas (extant works including 11 of the former, 34 of the latter) by the widely-traveled Luigi Boccherini of Lucca, Vienna, Paris and Madrid, only a few of which, regrettably, still enjoy a richly-deserved place in the repertoire.

Boccherini's sonatas were modest in scale, modeled on the slender proportions and binary forms inherited from the high Baroque. Instead, the focal point of these elegant and often harmonically precocious works was the display of Boccherini's supernally virtuosic abilities: these were pieces that, more than any other music before that time, represent a comprehensive catalog of the of the cellist's technical wares. As a player in particular, the Italian cast such a long shadow that although Beethoven never met Boccherini, most of the important cellists in his orbit—the Duports, Anton Kraft, and Romberg, all of whom we will presently encounter—knew and esteemed him, and were inspired by his example.

In any case, it would fall to a firebrand pianist to invent the cello sonata as we know it; and indeed, Beethoven styled his first sonatas “Deux Grandes Sonates pour le Clavecin ou Piano-Forte avec un Violoncelle obligé.” A particularly vivid account of the playing that informed these earliest works comes from one who had occasion to observe Beethoven over the course of many years, his student Carl Czerny: “No one matched him in the speed of his scales, double trills, leaps, etc. (not even Hummel). His posture while playing was ideally calm, noble and good to look at, without the slightest grimace (though he did begin to bend forward as his deafness increased). His fingers were very powerful, not long, and flattened at the tips by much playing; because, as he told me, he had practiced prodigiously as a youngster, usually until well past midnight.”

In the Op. 5 sonatas in particular the piano writing is of transcendent difficulty, and certainly calculated for maximum effect upon its audience. To learn about this intended audience we must turn to Berlin, and the seat of the Prussian monarchy.

Like most world leaders of today, King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia was an avid cellist. The king continued the remarkable cultural tradition established by his father, Frederick the Great (a flutist, composer and, most famously, the dedicatee of Bach's *Musical Offering*), by drawing many of Europe's preeminent composers and performers to his court. His political legacy has long been eclipsed by the catalog of pieces composed for him, a list that includes Mozart's three great String Quartets, K. 575, K. 589, and K. 590, all featuring the cello as coequal with the first violin; Haydn's Op. 50 (“Prussian”) String Quartets; numerous chamber works by Boccherini; and Beethoven's first two cello sonatas.

It was during a rare concert tour in 1796 that Beethoven would appear before Friedrich Wilhelm, playing among other things these cello sonatas, which he had evidently composed during his trip expressly for the occasion. It has long been supposed that his partner had been the eminent French soloist, Jean Pierre Duport, first cellist in the royal orchestra and the king's cello tutor. Recent research by the American cellist and scholar John Moran has demonstrated that the sonata companion was quite likely his younger brother, Jean Louis Duport. Jean Louis was the famous figure whose études every cellist knows, whose treatise on the cello remains a cornerstone of its pedagogy, and whose prowess caused the great Voltaire to exclaim, "You have turned an ox into a nightingale."

Beethoven evidently enjoyed some success in Berlin. He would stay in the Prussian capital a month, during which time he and Duport also performed his newly-minted *Twelve Variations on Handel's "See, the Conquering Hero Comes,"* a transparent homage to the king (and perhaps one other variation set). Beethoven was immoderately proud of his reward, a gold snuffbox filled with gold coins given him by Friedrich Wilhelm, saying, "...it was not an ordinary snuffbox, but such a one as it might have been customary to give to an ambassador."

The sonatas, published back in Vienna the following year as Op. 5, and dedicated to Friedrich Wilhelm, were Beethoven's first works for piano with another instrument, and with their later companions became the models for the great works to come in the genre, those sonatas by Mendelssohn, Chopin, Brahms, et al. that comprise the core of the repertoire. The 26-year-old Beethoven's knowledge of the cello was comprehensive. He was a very good violinist and played viola in the electoral orchestra in Bonn; but more important, he had been able to divine the capabilities of the cello firsthand from his fellow north German, Bernhard Romberg, who had joined the Bonn orchestra in 1790 and become his close friend. By all accounts, Romberg was among the greatest cellists of all time, and among the most important cellist-composers. (And despite the cellist's curmudgeonly dismissal of Beethoven's music—he openly derided the "Razumovsky" Quartets, and rejected Beethoven's offer to write a concerto for him, telling him he preferred his own concerti—Beethoven would uncharacteristically maintain his old friendship with Romberg throughout his lifetime.) Romberg was himself significantly influenced by Boccherini (and within several years would make a pilgrimage to Spain to visit him); and Beethoven too may have known the Italian's music from the extensive holdings in the electoral library.

In the two Op. 5 sonatas, one is immediately struck by the utter self-assurance of the young composer. However mindful he was of his models—Haydn and Mozart; perhaps Boccherini—he was fearless in striking out in unexpected directions of his own.

Unlike any of Beethoven's violin sonatas or his early piano sonatas, both cello sonatas are cast in two broad movements. The first movement of each is a sprawling edifice, their outsized proportions threatening to burst the inherited sonata-allegro form. Each, too, is prefaced by a meditative *Adagio* introduction (in the case of the G Minor Sonata, the second of the Op. 5 set, a very expansive section indeed, over six minutes in length). The character of the first movement of the G Minor Sonata (which we will perform in March on the second concert of this series) is a sharp contrast to the prevailing geniality of the First Sonata (and for that matter, to the second movement of this same piece), its tonality and restless energy evoking Mozart's famous works in that key. Each second movement is a rondo of a lighter character. The atmosphere of the F Major Sonata is almost unvaryingly sunny, but, taking a page from Haydn's book of tricks and going him one better, Beethoven delights in detours into remote harmonic regions. These excursions become all the more remarkable if the listener can prepare himself by pretending he has never heard anything written after 1800.

For those who like to think of the composer's work falling into the sacrosanct Three Periods, the Beethoven cello sonatas are very obliging. Dating from the Early Period are the first two sonatas of Op. 5: charming, relatively conventional, Classical-style essays that cede the lion's share of the material to the piano. At the other end are the final two sonatas of the Op. 102 set—condensed, quirky and aphoristic: proper, card-carrying Late Period Beethoven. And then occupying the Middle Period by itself is the grand, expansive Sonata in A Major, Op. 69, a monument of Beethoven's heroic style—though the hero of the piece is more Odysseus than Achilles.

Op. 69 continues to enjoy the greatest popularity of the five sonatas, and probably of *any* cello sonata. Written in 1807 and 1808, its gestation spanned the period when Beethoven was working on the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Mass in C, and the two piano trios of Op. 70 (which share the soaring lyricism of the cello sonata). The Sonata is dedicated to Beethoven's cellist friend Baron Ignaz von Gleichenstein (1778-1828), a secretary in the Imperial War Department. Besides being Beethoven's closest male friend at this time, he was also his business agent, and was instrumental in negotiating a significant stipend for the composer contributed by three members of the Viennese nobility. The first public performance of the Sonata took place on 5 March 1809. The cellist was Nicolaus Kraft, son of the famous Anton Kraft who had premiered both the Haydn D Major Concerto and Beethoven's own Triple Concerto, Op. 56.

On the dedication copy of the score he presented to von Gleichenstein in April 1809, Beethoven penned, "Inter lacrymas et luctus" ("Amidst tears and sorrow"), which may well have reflected the composer's inner state during that time of the bombardment and occupation of Vienna by Napoleon's army—but seems generally unrelated to the serene landscape of the A Major Sonata (which had, after all, been completed the previous year).

Expansive lyricism is the prevailing mood in the opening movement, though the first theme group does include a brief, stormy detour to the minor key that will resonate in the tonality and mood of the second movement. The fleeting presence of such a dark emotion is akin to Bruegel's famous painting of the flight of Icarus, whose tragic plunge to the sea is but a tiny fillip in a prevailingly peaceful and bucolic canvas.

The shade of Haydn is present in the playful rhythmic ambiguities of the Scherzo. The texture of the opening melody suggests a Renaissance compositional technique called "hocket:" imitation so close as to sound like an echo (the root of the word survives in our "hiccup"). Alternating with this angular and unrelenting dance is a contrasting "trio" section: a serene, major-key country dance that would have been at home in the "Pastorale" Symphony.

Legions of cellists have bemoaned the brevity of the Adagio cantabile, wishing Beethoven had chosen to write an extended slow movement. But the composer clearly considered these 18 bars to be the perfect complement to a work whose outer movements are already so amply discursive. There are other examples from this period, such as the "Waldstein" Sonata, in which the slow movement acts as an introduction to the finale.

The last movement is Beethoven's version of the country-dance finale beloved of Haydn, full of exuberant display work for the players, but tempered by the most tender, intimate lyrical episodes. No longer is this a sonata for piano with cello obbligato. With this sonata, along with the "Kreutzer" violin sonata, for the first time there is a full partnership between the two instruments. This radical parity is announced at the beginning of the sonata, and carries through the entire piece—but it is never more evident than in the delirium of the finale, where the two players weave their melodic skeins into one integral fabric.

By the time of his two late cello sonatas, many objectives had changed for Beethoven. These were no longer virtuosic vehicles clamoring for attention in the musical marketplace. The composer no longer had anything to prove, and the adulatory reception accorded the Seventh Symphony in December 1813 had assured him of financial security for the rest of his life.

The two sonatas of Op. 102 were dedicated to Countess Marie von Erdödy, a pianist of sterling qualities, and a close friend who had often advised the composer in personal and business matters (for which Beethoven jokingly called her his "father confessor"). The sonatas were written in 1815, and were probably given as a peace token commemorating the rapprochement between the two following an lengthy falling-out. They were first performed by Joseph Lincke, who was in service to the Erdödy's but was more famous as the cellist of the celebrated Schuppanzigh Quartet, the group that would premiere Beethoven's late quartets and many of Franz Schubert's. Lincke joined the group in 1808, replacing Anton Kraft, who was quarreling with Ignaz Schuppanzigh (Beethoven taking the violinist's side), and in so doing, became the first notable string quartet cellist. A contemporary wrote, "Linke [sic] treats his instrument as well as anyone in a quartet can ever manage it. He overcomes all difficulties, fits in so smoothly into the whole, and plays with so much feeling and expression, that one could not wish for him to give more." Lincke's stewardship of the Op. 102 sonatas is entirely fitting: these are pieces that, in their kindred stylistic features, keep company with the late string quartets.

The details of the premières are unknown, and it seems likely that it was heard *en famille* with the Countess and Lincke performing.

The C Major Sonata is a quirky little gem, among the shortest of all of Beethoven's sonatas. Everywhere are the idiosyncrasies of the composer's late period: formal iconoclasm, harmonic waywardness, a richly contrapuntal tapestry, and the willful contrast between sublime spirituality and childlike naïveté. The opening movement is a complex of two sections: a slow lilting Andante—"tenderly," Beethoven instructs his players—and the stormy Allegro vivace that ensues.

In the second movement, the affecting Adagio holds out the promise of the sort of late-Beethoven confidence that provides a glimpse of paradise. But before this idea has had a chance to unfold fully, the serene Andante from the beginning of the Sonata is fleetingly recalled—shades of the A Major Piano Sonata, Op. 101—before we are abruptly transported to the realm of the bumptious country dance *à la* Haydn. Only Beethoven, however, could invest the dance with such Olympian energy; and only he could take us on such vertiginous side-trips with his bagpipes-gone-mad episodes.

--R.L.

Biographies

Although cellist **Roger Lebow** began teaching at Chapman in the fall of 2005, he is a familiar figure in Los Angeles's musical landscape. He was for a decade Principal Cellist of the LA Mozart Orchestra, though these days you'll most often run into him in recital, with his chamber group Xtet (now in its 20th season), with the Pasadena Symphony, LA Opera and other local groups, or browsing through Vroman's Book Store, where he is a threat to buy something in almost any section, as long as it doesn't have an embossed cover. RL was also the 4th cellist from the right, in the back near the cimbasso and string basses, on the soundtrack of your favorite music.

Lebow is also on the faculty at Pomona College and the Claremont Graduate University, and has for many summers taught at the Henry Mancini Institute at UCLA. Formerly at Occidental College, he has also been on the guest faculty of CalArts, UC Irvine, and UC Bjoerling; and in his dotage regards teaching and other musical intervention as an increasingly central and fulfilling part of his life.

He has appeared as soloist in such arcana as Heitor Villa-Lobos's Fantasia and the Cello Concerto by Arthur Honegger (as well as standard repertoire by The Usual Dead White Suspects). He gave the première, with the LA Mozart Orchestra, of a new concerto by Byron Adams, which he commissioned. A new-music advocate of too many years' standing, he's also commissioned solos by Leo Smit, Donald Davis, John Steinmetz, Leon Milo, Jean-Pierre Tibi, and David Ocker, and participated in dozens of chamber music premières. He has recorded with Xtet on the Delos and New World labels, and has made several audiophile recordings for the Water Lily Acoustics label. As is curiously so often the case with avant-gardistes, he is also an ardent player, on baroque cello and viola da gamba, of early music.

In years past Mr Lebow was the founding cellist of the Armadillo String Quartet and the Clarion Trio, and he spent several waterlogged years swaddled in Gore-Tex® in Seattle with the Philadelphia String Quartet. He has appeared as soloist and chamber player at the Oregon Bach Festival and Cabrillo Music Festival. Other memorable and printable encounters include string quartet performances on a rafting trip through the Grand Canyon, his college rock group opening for the Jefferson Airplane in 1967, and participating in an original-pharmacology.

Lebow has been a renegade classical music announcer on NPR stations in Santa Monica and Seattle, and still entertains radio dreams. The author of one good poem (and a number of sphincter-clenchingly bad ones), he toils over a hot Macintosh writing program notes and album liner notes (or whatever the hell they-re called these days).

He dwells in a small cottage in Sierra Madre with librarian Wendy Schorr (who clandestinely brings home books with embossed covers for him). Their son Theo is a tenor studying voice at Mannes College of Music in New York City.

Phillip Young has concertized as soloist and chamber musician in such cities as New York, Washington D.C., and Seattle, as well as internationally in Winterthur, Switzerland; Salzburg; Paris; Rotterdam; Swakopmund, Namibia; and Cape Town, South Africa. He made his New York debut at Carnegie Hall with the St. Florian Piano Trio. The ensemble has performed together since 1987 and has toured extensively in Japan and in recent seasons has performed the complete Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms trios in Tokyo's Bunkakaikan Recital Hall. As assistant conductor, he has prepared productions for the Salzburg Festival, Opera Pacific, and the Los Angeles Opera. Mr. Young holds degrees from the Peabody Conservatory and the University of Southern California. He was also a Rotary Scholar to the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria and has received fellowships to the music Academy of the West, Tanglewood Music Center, and the Banff Centre for the Arts. He has studied piano with Ann Schein, chamber music with Menahem Pressler, and accompanying with Lotte Lehmann's accompanist, Gwendolyn Koldofsky. As an educator, Mr. Young has given master classes at the Shanghai Conservatory, at Oklahoma State University, and for the National Association of Teachers of Singing. He is an adjunct faculty member at Pasadena City College and at Pomona College.